

WINTER SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

With shorter days, cooler temperatures and recent rains means only one thing, winter is coming. October is fire prevention month and Mt Shasta City Fire Department is reminding citizens to follow a few safety precautions during the long winter months.

SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms plays a vital role in reducing deaths and injuries from residential structure fires. According to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), 95 percent of all homes in the United States have at least one smoke alarm. However, 65 percent of home fire related deaths occur in homes with no alarms or no working smoke alarms. The minimal effort of changing the batteries twice a year could mean the difference between life and death. Mt Shasta City Fire Department has the following tips on smoke alarms.

- Test smoke alarms once a month
- Replace batteries in smoke alarms twice a year
- Do not disable smoke alarms
- Dust smoke alarms to keep the working properly
- Replace smoke alarms every 10 years
- Practice fire drills so everyone in the home knows how to get out
- Do not re enter your home once you are out
- Have a meeting place for all family members once evacuated from the house

WOOD STOVES

Wood stoves cause over 4,000 residential fires every year. Carefully follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions. Look for solid construction, such as plate steel or cast iron metal. Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges, and door seals for smooth joints and seams. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, not green wood, artificial logs, or trash. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets. Inspect and clean your pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions.

ELETRIC SPACE HEATERS

Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism, and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Heaters are not dryers or tables; don't dry clothes or store objects on top of your heater. Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip. Always unplug your electric space heater when not in use.

KEROSENE HEATERS

Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Never fill your heater with gasoline or camp stove fuel; both flare-up easily. Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. When refueling, allow the appliance to cool first and then refuel outside. Never overfill any portable heater. Use the kerosene heater in a well ventilated room.

FIREPLACES

Fireplaces regularly build up creosote in their chimneys. They need to be cleaned out frequently and chimneys should be inspected for obstructions and cracks to prevent deadly chimney and roof fires. Check to make sure the damper is open before starting any fire. Never burn trash, paper or green wood in your fireplace. These materials cause heavy creosote buildup and are difficult to control. Use a screen heavy enough to stop rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace to catch flying sparks. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near any open flame. Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. Allow ashes to cool before disposing of them. Place ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from your home and any other nearby buildings. Never empty the ash directly into a trash can. Douse and saturate the ashes with water.

PORTABLE GENERATOR SAFETY

ACCORDING TO THE CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION (CPSC):

- From 1999 to 2010, nearly 600 generator-related carbon monoxide (CO) deaths have been reported to the CPSC.
- CO poisoning from generator use causes an annual average of 81 deaths. The majority of the deaths occurred as a result of using a generator inside a home's living space, in the basement or in the garage.
- One generator produces as much CO as hundreds of cars. CO from a generator is deadly and can incapacitate and kill you within minutes.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

What is carbon monoxide?

CO, often called "the silent killer," is a gas you cannot see, taste, or smell. It can be created when fossil fuels, such as kerosene, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane, methane or wood do not burn properly.

Where does carbon monoxide come from?

CO poisoning can result from faulty furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers or cars left running in garages.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, nausea and drowsiness. Exposure to undetected high levels of carbon monoxide can be fatal.

CO ALARM INSTALLATION

- Choose a CO alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Install and maintain CO alarms inside your home to provide early warning of carbon monoxide.
- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each separate sleeping area, on every level of the home, and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes or standards. For the best protection, have CO alarms that are interconnected throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and mounting height.
- Combination smoke-CO alarms must be installed in accordance with requirements for smoke alarms.
- CO alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms and vice versa. Know the difference between the sound of smoke alarms and the sound of CO alarms.

CO ALARMS: TESTING AND REPLACEMENT

- Test CO alarms at least once a month and replace them if they fail to respond correctly when tested. The sensors in CO alarms have a limited life. Replace the CO alarm according to manufacturer's instructions or when the end-of-life signal sounds.
- Know the difference between the sound of the CO alarm and the smoke alarm, and their low-battery signals. If the audible low battery signal sounds, replace the batteries or replace the device. If the CO alarm still sounds, get to a fresh air location and call 9-1-1.
- To keep CO alarms working well, follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning.

CO PRECAUTIONS

- Have fuel-burning heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood stoves, coal stoves, space heaters and portable heaters) and chimneys inspected by a professional every year.
- Open the damper for proper ventilation before using a fireplace.
- When purchasing new heating and cooking equipment, select products tested and labeled by a recognized testing laboratory.
- Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid CO poisoning. Keep the venting for exhaust clear and unblocked.

- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Never run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not blocked with snow, ice or other materials. The CO gas might kill people and pets.
- Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow and other debris.
- Only use barbecue grills outside, away from all doors, windows, vents and other building openings. Some grills can produce CO gas. Never use grills inside the home or the garage, even if the doors are open.
- Use portable generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas away from all doors, windows, vents and other building openings to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the home.

IF YOUR CO ALARM SOUNDS

- Immediately move to a fresh air location (outdoors or by an open window or door). Make sure everyone inside the home is accounted for.
- Call 9-1-1 from a fresh air location (outdoors or by an open window). Remain at a fresh air location until emergency personnel arrive to assist you.

TO AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARDS:

- Always use generators outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents.
- NEVER use generators in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home, following manufacturer's instructions.
- Test CO alarms often and replace batteries when needed.

TO AVOID ELECTRICAL HAZARDS:

- Keep the generator dry. Operate on a dry surface under an open, canopy- like structure.
- Dry your hands before touching the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into generator or use a heavy-duty outdoor- rated extension cord. Make sure the entire extension cord is free of cuts or tears and the plug has all 3 prongs, especially a grounding pin.

- NEVER plug the generator into a wall outlet. This practice, known as backfeeding, can cause an electrocution risk to utility workers and others served by the same utility transformer.
- If necessary to connect generator to house wiring to power appliances, have a qualified electrician install appropriate equipment. Or, your utility company may be able to install an appropriate transfer switch.

TO AVOID FIRE HAZARDS:

- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- Always store fuel outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass containers.
- Store fuel away from any fuel-burning appliance.